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Concerned Citizens to Save
Fayette County
P.O. Box 68
Scarbro, West Virginia 25917
July 10, 1986

Honorable John D. Rockefeller IV
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Rockefeller,

We appreciate your sharing with us the letter you received from James Seif, Region 3 Administrator of the EPA, June 25, 1986. We of the Concerned Citizens to Save Fayette County are also very concerned with the health and safety of our friends and family in Minden. That concern obligates us to point out what we feel is misinformation in Mr. Seif's letter. We hope that these problems will be corrected and the immediately required actions to protect our community will be taken. We will respond to each point in the order they were presented in the letter.

First of all, the containment structure no longer appears adequate. Prior to July 1st, members of our organization observed runoff from the soil pile. The runoff flowed out from the containment area and stained the surrounding soil. Heavy rains, typical of this area, fell July 1 and caused flooding of the Arbuckle Creek and many people's yards. After the rain stopped, the drainage pattern of the site was more clearly marked by a red oily trail originating at the dump site and visible all along the ground to the rock filter area. The rock filter area is separated from Arbuckle Creek by a concrete wall approximately two and one-half feet tall. There are three drainage pipes passing through the wall. From the opposite side of the wall to the Arbuckle Creek is only about ten more feet of drainage channel. This ten feet was also coated with the red substance and the chemical odor in the air was much stronger than usual. We realize that red is not a typical color for PCBs, but it is apparent that this red substance, what ever it is, is contaminating Arbuckle Creek and probably our backyards.

The next points concern site security. The fence erected is only a two foot tall snow fence. The EPA polreps say that there should be a chain link fence on the site. There are no visible warning signs, even the sign that marked the area as an immediate action cleanup site has fallen over. Signs on the snow fence read simply "posted" or mock the seriousness of the health threat, saying, "No hunting or fishing".

Complete and proper notification of the residents concerning the hazards associated with the site has also been lacking. People living within a half-mile radius of the site say that they received no warnings about the PCB contamination.

Neither were they informed of any emergency evacuation procedures necessary in case of an accident involving the large quantities of methanol used by the EPA during the attempted cleanup.

Public meetings were held and left the residents confused about health effects and ways to limit potential exposure. For instance, many people's backyards are in the floodplain of Arbuckle Creek and testing has shown contamination upto 17 parts per million (ppm). They were told at one meeting not to garden and at another that everything was safe. Levels as high as 190 ppm have been found in the creek sediment and people are still eating snapping turtles from there because its said to be safe. We are not sure what information we've been given is reliable and we are very frustrated by the lack of clear safety information.

The next point addresses the security guards on site. The police rarely come to Minden unless called; those 12 visits a day do not happen. There's a small plywood building labeled "high voltage" that was padlocked shut. For the past two weeks, that door has been left propped closed with a board or hanging open. The lock was simply torn off.

We have a number of other concerns. The two ponds, sumps for collecting groundwater, are tempting places for children to play. But, children who played there have come down with skin rashes.

There are also over thirty barrels left on site, apparently by the EPA; many are clearly labeled "CAUTION PCB". They are also clearly labeled "contaminated clothing", or "contaminated liner". These seem to be the remains of the failed cleanup attempt. These barrels are stored in various places around the site. Some are loosely sealed making hissing, sputtering noises, while others have been left in standing water surrounded by algae.

To this point in our response, we've just discussed the area where the EPA has done preliminary containment work. Before discussing the completion of cleanup at the site, what we beleive to be the major PCB dumping area needs to be tested. Former Shaffer employees report that the area cleaned up in front of the Shaffer office building is just the product of incidental spillage. The disposal of PCBs was actually done by pouring the contents of transformers and capacitors ranging in size from 40 to 500 gallons directly into a hole behind the site. This hole was about 12 feet deep, 40 feet wide and 50 feet long and was located at the drift mouth of the old Minden Mine. To our knowledge, no testing of this area has been done, although the EPA has been informed. So, while removal of the soil pile is a first step, complete cleanup is still far off. The issue of contamination of Arbuckle Creek, peoples yards, and what we believe is the major contamination area, have not been adequately dealt with.

The last point in Mr. Seif's letter we would like to address is the mention of ongoing contact with citizens groups. We have

had no contact with EPA personnel over the past two months. Our last contact was when Larry Rose, chairperson, was notified that the EPA would not be returning to finish the cleanup as scheduled.

In summary, it is obvious to us that considerable differences exist between what Mr. Seif is reporting to you and what we have experienced and see every day. Now, over a year and a half after this process began, our concerns remain the same. We again request the immediate removal and proper disposal of the contaminated soil pile and all other contaminated materials, i.e. the possible second major dump site, the Arbuckle Creek, and people's yards. Until these cleanups are accomplished, we are asking for these minimum safety precautions to be taken:

- 1) that a more effective means of containment be promptly installed;
- 2) that more frequent, extensive monitoring be done to verify containment;
- 3) that we receive copies of all monitoring results;
- 4) that a ten foot chain link fence be erected around the perimeter of the entire cleanup site and;
- 5) that a clear explanation of the potential exposure and health risks associated with the PCB contamination in Minden be given to the people. To assure an understanding of these issues, we would like a written factsheet to circulate in the community followed by a public hearing to answer remaining questions.

We would like to thank you for your continued concern and attention to this community problem. Please feel free to contact any member of our group for further details or to arrange a visit.

Respectfully,


Larry Rose
Chairperson

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cc. Senator Robert Byrd
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Lee Thomas, EPA Administrator
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